DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 256 EA 032 287

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TITLE	Some Theoretically-Methodological Starting Points of the School Reforms.
PUB DATE	1999-10-00
NOTE	11p.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Instruction; Political Influences; Research Methodology; *Social Change; Social Systems
IDENTIFIERS	Croatia

ABSTRACT

This paper examines what it calls the "theoretically methodological starting points" of educational reform within the larger context of social change. It states that educational reforms can appear as a result of radical social changes, that educational reforms are the operationalization and institutionalization of social transformation. These social changes appear in various realms, including science, economics, and politics. The paper analyzes various theoretical orientations, particularly those dealing with the theory of conflict and the theory of balance. The paper goes on to discuss two aspects of educational reform: aim (philosophical, ideological, and political goals) and process (how the reform is established, formulated, and realized). The paper states that the duality in detection of the aims and reform process presents methodological difficulty in the conception, realization, and evaluation of the reform because every reform results from the aims of education. (Contains 11 references.) (WFA)

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ED 472 256

Some Theoretically-Methodological Starting Points of the School Reforms

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October 1999

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SOME THEORETICALLY – METHODOLOGICAL STARTING POINTS OF THE SCHOOL REFORMS

This paper deals with some theoretically-methodological starting points of the reform of the educational and schooling system in the context of the social changes. Analysing various theoretical orientations (particulary those dealing with theory of conflict and balance), the authors insist on introducing the reforms which look on the educational and schooling system and its changes in the context of the internal legality and development of the enviroment which has been suffering the changes. In such conditions pedagogy (and other science) takes the role of examing and re-examing of the conception of reforms from the idea towards the realization and evaluation.

(summary)

School reform, the reform of the education system, is a constantly popular subject of the scientfically – experimental and operatively – practical work. Strivings after the reforms in school and education systems appear in every developing or already developed social system. These changes include many aspects and levels, from smaler extents when introducine some elements in the structure of school, to the global interventions in aims, structure and function of changes in the system of schooling and the system of education (Paulston, R., 1977, p.370). During last 3 decades an intensive and extensive movement into the reforms of school systems has been made, which is confirmed by a number of the international

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institutions' publications (UNESCO, OECD,...) and literature concerned with the strategy questions of the education reforms with the various theoretically – methodological hypothesis and starting points. The philosophy of the approach to the school and education reforms has also been changing, first of all by abandoning the classic, unificated approaches to the school and school system, and now the new approaches, strategies, conceptions and models of changes appear. There is also the emergence of a number of theories which in a number of ways try to explain the essence of the changes in school and education system in the context of the totality of the social changes. What appears as the result of the creation of the authentic conceptions, strategies and models of changes in school and education system is a terminological diversity. Therefore we meet the expressions: school reform, reform of education, reform of the system of education, education reform, changes of the school and education system, inovations in school and education system, social and education changes...

When dealing whit these problems, authors use various expressions in the same, but also in different terminological meaning starting from the different paradigmatical bases. For example, R. Sack thinks of the school reforms as of "the changes on a system level ... the consequences of whichoften spread over the margins of education system. Reforms are formulated, envisaged and planned on the central (ministry) level and their concrete usage performs on the central as a well as on the local level" (Sack, R. 1982, p.53). After many authors (Paulston, Ključnikov, Marshesi...), reforms are significant changes in the aims, structure, organisation and function of the education (school) system.

They include the whole of the education and school system, although the aims, causes, targets and consequences may differ. Therefore, for example, the reforms of education can appear as a result of radical social changes (social transformation). In this case, the reform of school and education system is just the operationalization and institutionalization of the social transformation. These reforms are focused on the faithful reflection of the social changes on the global changes in education and schoolsystem. The reforms of education and school system can be motivated by the tendency of the development of science, technique and technology and of the entire social development. Education and school system

has been blamed for not adjusting itself to the current development of science and technology, economic and social structure of the society, political constitution etc., i.e. for being in the state of the permanent crisis. The education in whole, i.e. the system of education and school as the part of that system in relation to the social, economic and political system, has an epithet of the dependent variable in which the system of education should not only respect the legality and lawfulness of the social development, but it should also adjust itself to that development. This kind of looking upon the position of school and school system developes sharp but not radical critic and tendency of reform which will make that the education and school system developes interdependently with their own lawfulness of development and of the development of the environment. When looking on the reforms of education (schooling) as on the result of the social changes (revolutionary and evolutionary, of conflicts and harmony of relations), reforms get marks of the fast or steady adaptation, accomodation to the social contradictons and relations. These kinds of reforms are more or less focused to the socialization (and etatization) of the education and school system. Simmons and Ključnikov believe that the education reforms are indivisible part of the entire social transformation and changes in politic that cause significant changes in the aims, norms and structures of the education system of a country which considerably influence individual and social development (Simmons, J. 1983.).

The reform concipates according to the social transformation or it reflects the social transformation in such a manner that the results of the reform are often expressed in the economically – educational chategories (the rate of the industrial growth, the education of the human capital and resources ...). From this it can be concluded that the reforms of education are often expressed in the cathegories that have nothing to do with the education system.

Although the reforms of education, in reggard to the components, mechanisms and factors of being conditioned. Base on the lawfulness of the social development, i.e. on everything that is out of the education system, it must be emphasised that it is necessary for them to conform the logic of the inner development lawfulness to the entire social system and its segments.

The orientation of the school reform is different when the reform is regarded as an attempt to solve some social problems and contradictions or to correct them within the scope of education and school system. This are all the attempts of the social reformation when the conception and performance of the school reform do not cause some serious changes in the social structure and relations. It is the attempt to construct "the model of school", "the model of the system of education" which would be independent of the social system or which could influence the social system and its structure with the aim of the chainging or correcting it.

The school reform directioning in the concepts of "the school ceasing" (from Roussoe) through the model of the "anti – school", is the attempt of canceling the school as an institution.

The reform conceptions that are based on these hypotheses result from the belief that the social development under the influence of the scientifically – technical revolution (especially of the 3rd and 4th technological wave – Tofler, 1983) has more negative than positive consequences on the development of man and civilization. For the fear of the power of technology which could take control over the man himself, the society should give up of such a rapid development, as well as of the school as an instrument of that kind development. Although these ideas weren't accepted in the latest reforms they do snow the neccessity of changing the structure and function of the education systems in the specific moment of the social development, under the condition that those changes present a new approach, the new perception of the school and education in the context of the scientifically – technological changes and risks these changes carry with themselves.

Recently, during last few decades, there has been an attempt of looking on the school reforms in the context of the interdependent relations of the social and education changes in society. Despite the fact that in that sense there is a number of theories, concepts and models of the social and education changes, and despite the significant differences of the theoretically – methodological orientation and a wide sphere of the reform phenomena that become visible in theoretical approaches, the tendency is to look on the theoreticaly–methodological and practical establishments of the reforms of education (schooling) in the context of the change of the social structure and a relation in which a reform is a complex phenomenon manifested in various aspects and caused by many factors.

The orientations of the reforms of school, despite the different theoretical basis and conceptual solutions, are not focused to have a partial look on the changes of schools and school system, to look on the individual segments (for example the changes in aims and function of school, structure of the program, administration, the process of making decision, the net of the school system, etc.), but to use the systematically – structural approach to bring into interdependence all relevant structural elements of school as a system in relation to the systems of the environment.

Many theoretical concepts of the social and education changes cause that "the planners of education, creators of the politic, administrators and others who deal with the reforms and who are absorbed in the political and technical researches, mainly apply the philosophical, theoretical and experimental orientations in the understanding of the social reality and use it as the strategies of the education and school reform" (Paulston, R., 1977., p.374). The theories whose hypotheses are proved by the empirical indicators can only serve as the basis for building a coherent the ory because "neither social scientists nor educators agree in the basic theories of the social and education changes" (Hogan, D., 1982., p.53). it is also difficult to separate the questions of the education and education changes from the social and political changes (structural politic, politic of the human capital, cultural capital, distribution of power, legitimity and power of knowledge, compensation politic where the school is compensation for the various non – school conflicts in the society ...). This we get the attempts to explain the reform of school by the theories of the balance / harmony and conflicts, i.e.

To explain the education reform as an attempt to create eqvivalence between the two already existing and new elements or as the steady progress towards the evolutive stages in the improvement of the part or the whole of the school and education system.

The theory of balance assumes that there is stability of system, that changes in one system agree with the process in the other system.

Theories which emphasize the conflictly – paradigmatic case "emphasize the tipical nonstability of the social systems and conflicts through the values, sources and powers that follow as the natural consequence" (Paulson, R., 1976.). Conflicts connected with the knowledge, economic goods and relations inside and outside of

school also deserwe our attention, therefore we must stop on the belief that schools are institutions which only try to enlarge knowledge of the pupils.

Instead of using the individualistic and psychological approach, it is necessary to explain the school in the context of the sociological, cultural and structural analysis (Hogan, D., 1986., p.52-55).

Theory of conflicts assumes that every change is the result of the conflict process in the sphere of the material interests, cultural values and needs of different groups in the realization of the control over the parts and elements of system. The school and education system is the part of the superstructure of the social and politic systems where the school reform or helps the performance of the function of the capital accumulation by establishing some of the crucial conditions for the creation of dynamic economy (Aplle, 1985., p.43). Thus school helps the hyerarchic structure of the labours, and that hyerarchy bases on the cultural forms of dynamic groups. Because of that function, the school and education system is being studied on the relation "basis – superstructure" (Aplle, 1985., p.64).

School is also important factor of the legitimization of different social groups. Although not restricted on showing the social system legal or on arranging relations between groups, as an institution school is the part of the social and politic system, part of the state, and its "administration and state machine" need legitimity and agreement of its superiors (those who control it). Schools also take part in the production of knowledge and technical inovation which are in the function of creating extra values. Therefore, in school prevail technicized knowledge and ideology which is best reflected in the structure and function of the "curriculum", with the mainly behaviouristic tendency towards the production of the useful knowledge, and in the same time towards the reproduction of the cultural values and forms of the dominant (ruling) groups (Altabach, 1988.).

School system is a sphere in which the processes of the accumulation, reproduction and oppositions between them are accepted and operationalized. A tendency focused only on the function of the accumulation and reproduction or the economic and ideologic help with the reproduction of the social division of work doesn't provide the total wiev on all activities which school performs within the complicated social relations. It is possible to understand school and education system and the sphere of their activity only in relation to other structural elements, mechanisms and functions of school in the contradictory (and opposite) social relations.

Economic contradictions (and conflicts) and their lawfulness do not even slightly encover the sphere of the school activity, because among other things there are specific systems of values, systems of knowledge, cultural values and goods. Thus the social system, or more precisely the state, strives in the agreement with the accumulation and reproduction demands for their personal legitimity, it suggests and perform the reforms which are usually planned with the aim of perserving the already existing social system or settling down the social conflicts within the scope of the perserving and transformation of the individual legitimity.

The theories of conflict in that sense show the basic relations in the social system between the social groups which significantly reflects on the reforms of school, however it is difficult to see the problems of reforms only through the prism of the conflict paradigmatic basis. Contradictions within the social system, economy, culture and politic as well as the risks from the conflicts, can result with discussions and concrete demands after the reform of education, they can give good results, but they are always on the line of the "action of optimism", on short terms. Various groups inside and outside the education system together with their contradictory relations often tend to present changes in the education system to perserve and strenghten their own interest and position. They appear as critics, usually critics and planners of reforms, but their strivings are more part of the strategy, ideological and political attempt to swerve the problems of the social structure and organization to the less important social questions like education, and it is less the total attempt to perform radical reform and to truly change the education. Therefore, the question is how manly of reforms have been basically focused to the total change in the function of education within the social superstructure, because reforms are primarily planned to perserv, keep and strenghten the already existing social superstructure. Those who concipate, plan and realize the reforms of education are usually expected to give the professional legitimity to the concept of reform, and to make suggestions which would realize the performance and evaluation of the global terms of reference of the suggested concept, and not to re – examine the concept of the reform itself.

Thus for the planners of education the professional competence is the striving that "the government achieves the reputation of professionalism", and its real function is to provide help in the technological perfectionism of the reform realization. Although, as Simmons emphasised it, when explaing the school and education

reform "evidences are on the side of the theory of conflict" (Simmons, J., 1983., p.420-426). However, it should be emphasised that the sphere of education and the intervention in that sphere cannot be exclusively based on the conflict of social relations and groups, which break up in the sphere of education and which enable and cause reconsiderations and changes in that sphere. To reduce the process of the reform of education and schooling to the transformation of existing social relations means in the same time to base that process on the change of the politically —institutional demands for the realization of the particular aims, and not on the hypotheses about dynamic shift in the basis of education, education and school system in its inner structure and the logicality in relation in the social super and suprastructure.

R. Sack mentions two things in that sense, two aspects of school and education reforms: aims and processes (Sack, R., 1982., p.34). We get informed about the aims of education reforms primarily through the documents (mainly formal) created by the commitees ("national bodies") of the ministry of education, and we get informed about the processes of planning, realization and evaluation reforms through works of studies (Sack, R., 1982., p.64 &65).

This duality in detection of the aims and reform processes presents important methodological difficulty from the very beginning in the conception, realization and evaluation of the reforms of education, because everyreform results from the aims of education. Although these aims express philosophical, ideological and political tendencies, it is necessary to take into account whether the theoretically – methodological bases of reform can be focused on the study only of "the processes of reforms", i.e. of how the reform is established, formulated and realized, who performs it, and for whom and by using which organization methods (Sack, R., ibid, p.65). This leads to the theoretically – methodological reductionism, because the planners of education changes detect aims, they are interested in the aims and results, and analists are left to detect the mechanisms and means that would make the best realization of the particular ideas, in the same time avoiding the critical judgements about what the reform should be like. Naturally, it doesen't mean that the society and its institutions don't have the legitimate right to set the aims of changes in education (reforms) and expected results as well, and in the same time the planners of education and educational system politic should also take into account the right and neccessity that analists should focus the study of school and

education reform from its aims through process and dynamism of concipation, realization and evaluation. This kind of looking on the position of aims and process of education reforms makes unneccessary every discussion about which aspect can best show the education reforms, because it is a complete process and without one or the other it is impossible to establish school and education system methodologically correct, from the idea through the realization and evaluation.

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